

**TESTIMONY
OF
BRYAN SIVAK, ACTING CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER
on
“PR18-0570, CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER OF THE OFFICE OF THE
CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER BRYAN SIVAK CONFIRMATION
RESOLUTION OF 2009”**

**Before the
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND THE
ENVIRONMENT**

COUNCILMEMBER MARY CHEH, CHAIR

**December 9, 2009
10:00 am**

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BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON
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Introduction

Good morning, Madam Chair. My name is Bryan Sivak, Acting Chief Technology Officer (CTO) for the District of Columbia. I'm honored that the Mayor has nominated me to the post of CTO serving this diverse and exciting city. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss my qualifications.

Qualifications

I've long had a fascination with technology as an enabler of change to improve business processes and provide new opportunities. I believe the most effective approach to applying technology to improve our government and community combines expertise in technology and business. My experience encompasses both.

My fascination with technology has been virtually lifelong. At the age of eight, I was assembling computers with my father on the living room floor; by high school, I was teaching myself the basics of programming; and when I arrived at the University of Chicago, I immediately started working in the school's computer labs. Here I gained some of my earliest experience in bringing the benefits of technology to others. In the early 90s very few people had experience with computers, and I was able to introduce students and faculty to the brave new world of the Internet and associated technologies. While I concentrated in computer science, I also participated in the school's renowned Economics program, which provided me with a firm grounding in the theory and practice of business. Additionally, in my final year at Chicago, I helped develop the web's first image search engine, Webseer.

This experience at the intersection of innovative technology and business led directly to the focus of my professional career—building a company devoted to developing technology solutions to

solve a wide variety of business problems. After a brief service as a software engineer with IBM, I left to found Electric Knowledge, a software company providing intelligent natural language search applications for the enterprise. A friend and I started the company in 1998 with nothing but a concept. By the end of 2002 we had built a staff of 15, a market capitalization of about \$2 million, and a customer base including Bank of America and Fidelity Investments, which both used our software prominently on their public-facing websites. In 2002 Electric Knowledge merged with another company to form InQuira. There I continued in a leadership role, managing intelligent growth within the constraints of fiscal responsibility. In 2004, I proposed a strategic initiative to enter the European, Middle Eastern, and Asian markets, and in 2005 I moved to London to build the European InQuira organization from the ground up. Starting with just myself and a \$20,000 investment, by the end of 2006 we had six employees, 15 by the end of 2007, and 25 as of October 2009, with a 2009 European budget of around \$9 million. InQuira's diverse customer base included financial services institutions such as the Royal Bank of Scotland, technology organizations such as Nokia, and governmental groups such as the UK Ministry of Defence and the Financial Services Authority.

Through this educational and professional history I've acquired experience in all the technology areas in OCTO's portfolio—for example, project management, web applications, business intelligence, networks, data centers, and telecommunications—as well as the business processes of budgeting, financial management, program management, personnel, and procurement. I've also developed a deep understanding of the role of information technology in advancing the welfare of people and communities, and extensive knowledge of breakthrough technologies that we can harness to improve government efficiency and service quality. Finally, I come to OCTO with over a decade of experience in successfully responding to challenges and surmounting

significant obstacles—technical, financial, logistical, and cultural. With this experience, I am well equipped and well prepared to lead a broad technology organization in serving a wide and diverse customer base in a time of fiscal austerity.

Vision: Premier Technology Customer Service for District Agencies and Residents

My vision for OCTO flows from my view of technology as a tool for enabling change and opportunity, as well as from the impressive resources I have discovered at OCTO. OCTO has built a robust technology infrastructure, a broad suite of state-of-the-art applications, and a nimble, innovative technology solutions capability. My goal is to shape OCTO into a premier customer-focused organization that will use these resources to optimally meet the technology needs of District agencies and citizens—and, in so doing, enhance the efficiency of government and the quality of life for District residents.

Accomplishments

In my seven weeks at OCTO, I've outlined an initial agenda to transform this vision into reality and have implemented several aspects of this agenda. A few highlights are as follows:

Bridging the Digital Divide: First, one of our central objectives is to continue and expand our efforts to bridge the digital divide. Steps we've taken during my tenure include:

1. Continuing to install free WiFi hotspots at libraries, recreation centers, and other publicly accessible locations;
2. Requesting broadband stimulus funding to blanket underserved communities in Wards 5, 7, and 8 with free, open WiFi Internet access for the home;
3. Requesting broadband stimulus dollars to fund 70 computer training centers District-wide and a computer subsidy program—so that we can ensure meaningful, practical Internet access by meeting the foundational requirements of computers and training;

4. Redesigning the District's web portal based on a citizen-centric approach, and incorporating social media. The first site to launch will be DPW's website on December 17; followed by an aggressive rollout plan for the remaining websites, a mobile portal including frequently accessed city services, robust personalization capabilities, and integrated social media features;
5. New initiatives for mentoring and education in OCTO and DC Public Schools (DCPS), designed to provide students with the skills they need to land well-paid technology jobs in an increasingly IT-centric society.

Engaging Customers: Second, central to my vision is applying a simple, but key concept from the private sector—stellar customer service drives the highest return on investment. To paraphrase one of my favorite private sector companies, I look at OCTO as a customer service agency that happens to provide technology solutions. For example, I am fine-tuning the role of our Program Management Office (PMO) to focus specifically on account management. I expect PMO staff to spend most of their time onsite at their customer agencies' offices, learning their business practices and needs so OCTO can design effective technology solutions to their business problems. We are also developing a service catalog tool to help our PMO staff educate their customers about OCTO services and capabilities. One early example of our new account management focus is our work with the Department of Human Services to digitize over 22 million documents that span the past 10 years. For our District resident customers, I participated in Councilmember Alexander's citywide ANC commissioners meeting on Saturday November 21st, and I am scheduling a series of "town hall" sessions at ANC meetings in each ward to gather feedback about local technology needs, ideas and concerns. I will distribute technology resource maps showing free Internet hotspots and computer centers in each ward. Madam Chair

and members of the Committee, I hope you can join me at what I expect will be lively and productive community functions.

Organizational Reforms to Improve Customer Service and Increase Efficiency: Third, in my experience, customer service and efficiency go hand in hand. Specifically, I believe that organizations that are structured in the most efficient way have the most resources to devote to innovations that serve customers better. To that end, I am reviewing OCTO as a whole and each individual program for opportunities to consolidate and streamline functions and reduce unnecessary expenditures. One immediate opportunity that will directly affect customer service is a consolidation and restructuring of our IT helpdesk functions to align with industry best practices. This effort, in particular, will enable us to reduce costs, improve customer service, retain talented individuals, and develop employee expertise.

Enhanced Program Controls: Fourth, a key contributor to enhanced efficiency is strengthening controls against waste, fraud, and abuse. Throughout the past three years, OCTO has steadily increased controls in finance, procurement, program management, personnel management, and physical security—but there is still more to do. I’m starting with a focus on procurement, working closely with Director Gragan. We are exploring opportunities to reduce our technology spend through expanded use of cloud computing; developing District-standard hardware and software agreements to strengthen District control over the terms of our technology purchases, and identifying enterprise applications for broad use across the District. We are also looking at ways to fine-tune the ITSA program to strengthen accountability and increase transparency in temporary IT staff procurement and address concerns of the CBE community.

Promoting Transparency: Fifth, we are continuing to deploy technology to help fulfill this Administration's commitment to transparency in government. We are expanding OCTO's Digital Public Square initiative (dps.dc.gov), which has opened vast amounts of District government data to public view through data catalogs, data feeds, mapping applications, transparency websites, social media tools, and more. We have expanded the total number of datasets available to the public to 405 by this past Thanksgiving. Just this week we expanded our data site and our digital public square site with links to a set of new, free, visualization tools. These free tools present the data in a variety of new, easy-to-understand ways—charts, graphs, reports, tables, maps, and more—and allow visitors to the sites to present and analyze the data themselves, slicing and dicing it in brand-new ways. Concurrently, we're working with OCP to expand our procurement transparency websites, such as contracts.dc.gov, which provide a step-by-step view of major procurements from start to finish. And we're now collaborating with the Executive Office of the Mayor and the Office of the Attorney General to develop a new FOIA processing system. The planned system will automate, streamline, and standardize the District's FOIA processing and review methods, helping speed FOIA responses, strengthen FOIA compliance, and serve the ultimate goal of getting more government information out to the public.

Supporting Education: Sixth, one of my exciting discoveries at OCTO has been our strong and growing partnership with DCPS, DCPL, and DPR to provide technology support and technology-enabled learning environments for District students at schools, libraries, and recreation centers. In addition to continuing in our role as the IT Department for DCPS, I plan to expand these education partnerships in several ways. One initiative we're planning now would replicate our Ward 8 Barry Farms computer lab project—which transformed an unused

equipment closet into a full-service computer lab—at other recreation centers elsewhere in the city. In addition, OCTO recently brokered a partnership among DCPL, Byte Back, First Time Computers, One Economy, Cricket Wireless and others to provide free wireless internet access in conjunction with computer training at District libraries, with each participant receiving his/her own computer upon graduation. A third initiative is establishing an architecture that will simultaneously improve phone and network services to the classroom, while also reducing operational costs by maximizing the use of the federal E-Rate program.

Mentoring District Youth: Seventh, under my leadership, OCTO will expand the employment and mentoring opportunities we provide for District youth in our Jefferson Middle School program, our summer youth employment program, and our school-year youth employment program. At Jefferson, officials in our Geographic Information Systems (GIS) program, which moved to the school last year, introduce students to the exciting tools and applications of GIS. In our summer and school-year employment programs, we provide real, hands-on technology work opportunities and mentoring that enable youth to make meaningful contributions to OCTO's services and receive recognition for their work. This year we hope to equal or exceed the numbers of youth we employed in each program--roughly 80 for summer youth and 30 during the school-year--and to intensify training in the business and people skills they need to acquire and retain jobs. For example, one group of interns was trained to use District-wide applications and are now themselves engaged in training employees across the District on the use of these applications.

Concluding Remarks

I would like to conclude on a personal note. I've always had a deep interest in public service, and I look forward to the opportunity to leverage my skills and expertise in the nation's

capital. Years from now I want to look back on my service to the District, and see that I have made a tangible difference in the lives of the citizens of this city.

I am honored and excited to embark on my service here, and I look forward to working with all of you to better serve this great city.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am pleased to answer any questions you may have at this time.